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Maine Women's Lobby

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Telephone: 622-0851

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March 1990

NEWSLETTER

Number 2

DELAY OF MAINE HEALTH PROGRAM DRAWS FIRE

As part of the budget plan to reduce the State's \$210 million deficit, Governor McKernan has called for delaying the July 1990 implementation of the Maine Health Program (MHP) enacted by the Legislature last year. The 1989 key initiative of the Consumers for Affordable Health Care—a program that would provide health coverage for about 22,000 Maine people—was supported by hospitals, consumer advocates, health care providers, and business people. The governor has requested that implementation be postponed until April 1991.

The program was passed only after supporting groups devised a tax package that would generate revenue to sustain the program in full. This package materialized by increasing "sin" taxes on such items as cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and bar liquor; repealing the sales tax exemption on lodging for more than 28 days; and boosting the sales tax on video rentals and on the resale of recreational boats. Many groups, including the MWL, were not enthusiastic about the tax increases given their regressive nature, but it was unanimously agreed that the

Maine Health Program is urgently needed to meet the growing health care requirements of Maine people.

The \$13 million generated during this nine-month delay would be used to reduce the State deficit rather than support the MHP.

The Lobby opposes the move for a number of reasons:

1. Delaying the program is short-sighted: the cost savings to the general fund will simply be passed on to Maine hospitals, employers, and other insurance payors whose escalating premiums will continue to pay for the charity care provided to Maine's uninsured citizens.
2. The decision to delay the program was made without requesting any impact analysis by Maine hospitals or the Maine Health Care Finance Commission to determine its effect on providers and insurance payors.

(Continued on page 2)

Darrilyn Peters, MWL Chair

Joanne D'Arcangelo, Lobbyist

Mail: Maine Women's Lobby
P.O. Box 15
Hallowell, ME 04347
Tele: 622-0851

Legislators

Mail: Maine State House
State House Station #2
Augusta, Maine 04333

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTORY

To contact your legislators
when the Legislature is in
session (January-April 1990):

•State Senators:
289-1540 or
1-800-423-6900 (toll free)

•State Representatives:
289-1400 or
1-800-423-2900 (toll free)

To check the status of a
bill:

•Office of Legislative
Information:
289-1692

To request copies of bills:

•Legislative Document
Room:
289-1408

To contact Joanne
D'Arcangelo,
MWL Lobbyist:

•Maine Women's Lobby
Office:
622-0851
•State House Lobbyist
Answering Service:
623-1220

(Continued from page 1)

3. The increase in taxes was approved with the understanding they would be used specifically to support the Maine Health Program, not to reduce the deficit.
4. The proposal to delay the program carries no guarantee the MHP will ever start. The very real possibility exists that, once these revenue are used to balance the budget, the funds may never be set aside to bring the program on line.

The MWL Board of Directors has written a letter to Governor McKernan expressing these concerns and encourages MWL members—particularly those who would be served by the Maine Health Program—to write or call the governor to oppose the delay:

The Honorable John R. McKernan, Jr.
Office of the Governor
State House Station #1
Augusta, Maine 04333
289-3531

WHATCHAMACALLIT

Can you think of a better name than that for the
Lobby's newsletter?

Deb Deatrack and Eleanor Goldberg are designing a new format for the newsletter. They need a snappy new name to go with it. ("Statehouse Rag" and "Heard It Through The Grapevine" have already been submitted!)

Any ideas? Please call Eleanor (days: 774-8444; evenings: 773-0321) with your suggestions or drop a note to: MWL, P.O. Box 15, Hallowell, Maine 04347.

Prize for the winning name:
Three months without a fundraising letter from the Lobby.

SAVE THE DATE !!

Maine Women's Lobby

Annual Cocktail Party
The Senator Inn, Augusta
March 15, 1990 5-7 p.m.

...ome rub elbows with other Lobby members, legislators,
governmental officials, lobbyists, and political candidates.

Join in an annual celebration of the Lobby's enormous
effectiveness in the halls of the Capitol.

Added attractions: delectable hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar,
and the drawing for the Maine Women's Lobby Raffle -
23 prizes representing outstanding works
by Maine craftswomen and artists.

Please send this form with your check today

☐ I will attend the Lobby Cocktail Party
Enclosed please find \$ _____ for _____ tickets.

☐ I cannot attend but here's my contribution
for \$ _____ to the Maine Women's Lobby

Name _____
Address _____
The Maine Women's Lobby
P.O. Box 15, Hallowell, Maine 04347

SELF-SUFFICIENCY THROUGH SELF-EMPLOYMENT

In an effort to expand opportunities for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients to become economically self-sufficient, a group of employment training and business assistance providers formed the AFDC Self-Employment Task Force in 1988. Organizations represented on the task force were the Women's Business Development Corporation (WBDC); Coastal Enterprises, Inc.; the Training Resource Center; Women in Nurturing Group Support (WINGS); the Welfare Employment, Education and Training (WEET) Program; the AFDC Advisory Council; and the Displaced Homemakers Program.

Task force members felt that small business ownership offers several advantages to AFDC recipients: it is a major source of employment, particularly in rural areas of Maine; it can provide the flexibility single parents need to balance work and family responsibilities; and it allows women the opportunity to use their life experiences and skills.

The task force conducted a survey of welfare recipients to determine their interest in working for themselves; reviewed the impact of welfare regulations on self-employment efforts; and investigated self-employment support programs in Europe, the Third World, and the United States.

The European experience suggests that approximately five percent of recipients of unemployment and welfare payments can succeed at starting a small business if they receive sufficient financial, educational, and regulatory support.

The survey of Maine AFDC recipients demonstrated considerable support for self-employment. Of the 1,660 questionnaires mailed, 422 (24%) were returned. Of these responses, 254 (60%) indicated an interest in self-employment.

The respondents who expressed interest in self-employment were predominantly women (97%) and were relatively well educated (only 16% had not graduated high school). On the average, they had been receiving AFDC for a considerable length of time: two-thirds of them had been on welfare for more than two years (a standard indicator of long-term receipt), and nearly 40% had been on welfare for longer than five years.

The survey revealed a group of people eager to gain control over their lives, to leave welfare, and to provide a better future for their children. Not surprisingly, their business ideas reflect their personal experiences; for example, making and selling crafts, providing child care, running a restaurant or a cleaning service.

The respondents knew what they would need to get a business started: nine out of ten said they would need money for start-up costs; more than half said training in business management. Nearly half mentioned medical coverage, and one in four expressed an interest in peer support.

The qualities they would bring to running a small business are evidence of a strong work ethic; many respondents described themselves as skilled, hard-working, motivated, ambitious, dependable, and reliable.

The AFDC Self-Employment Task Force has documented the results of its activities in a report that analyzes the benefits of self-employment and recommends steps which state policy makers can take to reduce barriers and increase support for this employment option.

For a copy of the report, Self-Employment for Maine's AFDC Recipients: An Opportunity for Change, A Prescription for Action, call Ellen Golden, at Coastal Enterprises, Inc., 882-7552.

114TH LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

STATUS OF BILLS

The following summarizes bills included on the 1990 slate of the Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition (WLAC), as well as other bills on which the MWL has testified.

Again, we will be soliciting members' support to lobby legislators on our priority bills, particularly "AN ACT TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF BREAST CANCER MORTALITY IN MAINE," the MWL's priority bill. If you wish to help mobilize other Lobby members in your area, please complete the "Local Lobby Coordinator Form" found elsewhere in this newsletter and return it to us as soon as possible.

MWL PRIORITY BILLS

- **AN ACT to Reduce the Incidence of Breast Cancer Mortality in Maine—LD 2297** •

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Women's Lobby

Legislative Sponsors: Senators Tom Andrews, Nancy Clark, and Pam Cahill and Representative Charlene Rydell

Committee: Banking and Insurance

Status: Public hearing to be held before the Committee on Banking and Insurance, March 6, 1990, 1:00 P.M., Room 427, State House

Summary: This bill will guarantee insurance coverage for mammography screening to enhance early detection of breast cancer. Six hundred Maine women are diagnosed with breast cancer every year, and 200 die from the disease each year. Early detection can reduce breast cancer mortality by 30-50% — which could mean saving the lives of 60-100 Maine women each and every year! PLEASE CALL OR WRITE YOUR LEGISLATORS AND GOVERNOR MCKERNAN TO URGE THEIR ENDORSEMENT OF LD 2297!!

- **AA to Develop a Pilot Project for a Substance Abuse Halfway House for Pregnant Women and Mothers of Young Children—LD 2280** •

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Women's Lobby

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives Marge Clark and Lorraine Chonko and Senators Nancy Clark and Pam Cahill

Status: Under consideration by the Committee on Human Resources, which held a public hearing on February 16, 1990.

Summary: Chemical dependent mothers who want residential treatment and have no one to care for their children are forced to give up custody or delay, if not forego, residential treatment entirely. National studies document that lack of accessibility of child care is the key issue that deters mothers from seeking treatment. Substance abuse halfway houses for pregnant women and mothers with young children operating in other states have proven to be highly successful, including the following benefits: elimination of emotionally damaging effects of trauma associated with separation of mothers and children during treatment; early treatment and prevention services for children of addicted mothers; specialized single parenting education programs; continuation of treatment for pregnant women after giving birth; and specialized vocational and educational programs. This legislation, which calls for a \$150,000 appropriation, would extend this type of service, providing residential services to pregnant women and mothers of young children.

- **AA to Provide Greater Protection to Victims of Domestic Violence—LD 2177 and AA to Amend the Domestic Abuse Laws—LD 2287 •**

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Coalition for Family Crisis Services

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives Mary Cathcart, Susan Farnsworth, and Jack Richards and Senator Muriel Halloway

Status: Under consideration and study by the Committee on Judiciary, which held public hearings on these bills February 6 and 22, respectively.

Summary: During the summer and fall, a task force of the Public Safety Commission, including legislators, legal assistants, and advocates, evaluated the Maine Domestic Violence statute and proposed these bills, which include a broader definition of abuse and various procedural requirements to make the criminal justice system more responsive to the needs of battered women.

- **AA to Enhance Access to Prenatal Care in Underserved Areas—LD 1983 •**

WLAC Sponsor: Family Planning Association of Maine

Legislative Sponsors: Senators Pam Cahill and Paul Gauvreau and Representatives Marge Clark and Donnell Carroll

Status: Under study by the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, which held a public hearing on the bill January 17, 1990.

Summary: A lack of access to obstetrical care is a very severe problem in some areas of the State, especially among Medicaid recipients, because some physicians will not serve these patients. Prenatal and case management services can be provided in a clinic setting by physician extenders and nurse practitioners, with physicians overseeing the practice. The bill would provide \$75,000 to develop a clinic, or clinics, to offer such services to Medicaid recipients in underserved areas.

- **AA to Ensure Continuity of Health Insurance Coverage—LD 2274 •**

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods. Also the key legislative initiative of Consumers for Affordable Health Care Coalition, of which the Maine Women's Lobby is a partner organization.

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives Charlene Rydell and Peter Manning and Senators Ray Theriault and Bev Bustin.

Status: Public hearing scheduled before the Committee on Banking and Insurance, Thursday, March 8, 1990, 1:00 P.M., Room 427, State House

Summary: This bill seeks to prevent health insurance policies from imposing pre-existing conditions screening, exclusions, or waiting periods when an individual or group switches from one plan to another. Many people find themselves without the health insurance coverage they need when they move from one place of employment to another, or their employer switches insurance policies and the new policy excludes coverage of individuals, either totally or in part, based on pre-existing conditions.

- **AA to Increase Displaced Homemakers Program Funding to Continue Rural Outreach, Employment, and Training and Support Services for Maine Displaced Homemakers—LD 1856 •**

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Displaced Homemaker Project

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives John Lisnik, Judy Foss, and Ruth Foster and Senator Nancy Clark

Status: Under consideration by the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, which held a public hearing on January 22, 1990.

Summary: This bill, which calls for a \$225,378 appropriation, provides for seven permanent staff positions and operating expenses to assure the continuation and expansion of ongoing outreach, training and support services, and coordination of resources to displaced homemakers living in rural areas of the State.

- **AA to Provide for Smoking Cessation Programs and Substance Abuse Education in the Maine WIC Program—LD 1997** •

WLAC Sponsor: WIC Directors' Association

Legislative Sponsors: Senators Nancy Clark and Barbara Gill and Representatives Ruth Foster and John Lisnik

Status: Under consideration by Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, which held a public hearing on January 25, 1990.

Summary: Effective October 1989, WIC staff will be required to provide smoking cessation programs and substance abuse education in addition to nutrition education to clients. At this time, approximately 40% of the pregnant women on WIC smoke, and 10% admit to using alcohol. The total number of families with children suffering from the effects of second-hand smoke, as well as living in households with chronic, untreated substance abuse, is much higher. In order to properly implement smoking cessation and substance abuse programs, \$70,000 is needed to provide proper training and consultants in each of the WIC program's 11 local agency sites.

- **AA to Provide Access to Preventive Dental Care Services for Medicaid Eligible Elderly, Disabled, and Low Income Clients—LD 1934** •

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives Marge Clark and Christine Burke and Senators Paul Gauvreau and Joseph Brannigan

Status: As of press time, "Ought to Pass" recommendation issued by Human Resources Committee accepted by Maine House. Likely to pass initial approval by Senate and will be sent to the Appropriations Table for approval of funding request.

Summary: Amended version of this bill will expand, on a demonstration basis, the current scope of the Medicaid dental program (which covers only emergency services) to include diagnostic, corrective, and preventive services as well. Purpose of demonstration project is to determine the long-term cost effectiveness of maintaining good dental health rather than providing treatment only under emergency conditions.

- **AA to Improve the Standard of Living of Children from Low Income Families—LD 2136** •

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods

Legislative Sponsors: Senators Nancy Clark and Joseph Brannigan and Representatives Christine Burke and Donnell Carroll

Status: Under consideration by the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, which held a public hearing on January 30, 1990.

Summary: This bill proposes to increase AFDC benefits by eight percent in the State fiscal year 1991. Despite almost annual increase over the last decade, the maximum AFDC benefit remains at only one-half of the federal poverty level. Beginning January 1, 1990, the maximum grant for a parent and one child will be \$337 monthly. A parent and two children will receive \$453 monthly. This includes a \$4M appropriation request.

- **AA to Provide Greater Compliance with General Assistance Laws—LD 2239** •

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives Marge Clark and Christine Burke and Senators Paul Gauvreau and Joseph Brannigan

Status: Under consideration by the Committee on Human Resources, which held a public hearing on February 14, 1990.

Summary: This bill will increase penalties that the Department of Human Services can impose against a municipality that wrongfully denies an applicant for public assistance and will require all towns to post, in their General Assistance offices, the toll-free, State number for making complaints, thereby providing individuals recourse for wrongful denial.

• **AA to Amend the Law Governing Family and
Medical Leave—LD 1908** •

WLAC Sponsor: Maine Commission for Women

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives Marge Clark and John Martin and Senators Nancy Clark and Don Esty.

Status: As of press time, House accepted "Ought to Pass" recommendation issued by Labor Committee, and approval without debate is expected by the Senate.

Summary: This bill will repeal a "sunset" provision which would make Maine's Family and Medical Leave Law automatically expire on July 1, 1990. This would, thereby place the law permanently on the books. The amended version of the bill will also require posting of the rights afforded by the law in all workplaces.

• **AA to Remove Barriers to the Location of Family Day Care Homes in
Areas Zoned for Residential Use—LD 2209** •

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives Wendy Ault and Charlie Priest

Status: Recommendation by Human Resources Committee to reject the bill was accepted by the full Legislature.

Summary: Because some municipalities have "zoned out" day care centers from locating in certain areas, this bill would have prohibited towns from such practices in regards to day care centers with 12 or fewer children. Opposition view that this would violate the spirit of the "home rule" provision prevailed, and the bill was defeated.

• **AA Concerning the State Minimum Wage—LD 2279** •

Legislative Sponsors: Representative Ed McHenry, Senate President Charles Pray, and House Speaker John Martin.

Status: Under consideration by Committee on Labor, which held a public hearing on February 21, 1990.

Summary: This bill would annually "index" the State's minimum wage by the same percentage increase (or decrease) of the State's average weekly wage for the previous calendar year. This would eliminate the need for arbitrary increases on an irregular basis that may not reflect the true increase in Maine's standard of living and working.

• **AA to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act to
Prohibit Educational Discrimination on
the Basis of National Origin—LD 1877** •

Legislative sponsors: Representative Pat Paradis, House Speaker John Martin, and Senators Steve Estes and Barbara Gill.

Status: Committee on Judiciary has issued a unanimous "Ought to Pass" recommendation on the original bill, without amendment.

Summary: The original bill extends protection against discrimination and entitlement to equal opportunity in Maine's public school systems to children with limited English proficiency. An amendment which was suggested by a private organization proposed to exempt all private clubs from the Maine Human Rights Act, thereby allowing institutions of this type to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, handicap, and sex. The Maine Women's Lobby neither supported nor opposed the original bill, but opposed the amendment.

- **AA to Implement the Training and Work Incentive Provisions of the Federal Family Support Act of 1988—LD 2198, and AA to Implement Provisions of the Federal Family Support Act of 1988 and Improve Access to Services in the Additional Support for People in Retraining and Education Programs—LD 2202 •**

Legislative Sponsors: House Speaker John Martin, Representatives Marge Clark and John Lisnik, and Senator Paul Gauvreau.

Status: LD 2198 is under consideration by the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, which held a public hearing on January 30, 1990; LD 2202 is under consideration by the Committee on Human Resources, which held a public hearing on February 21, 1990.

Summary: These are companion bills which propose to restructure Maine's ASPIRE program. LD 2202 proposes a number of policy changes governing Maine's AFDC training program, including provisions requiring the Department of Human Services to provide case management services to clients and to contract with a variety of appropriate providers, not just JTPA agencies, for education and training services. In addition to eliminating duplication of services, these policy changes will also generate additional federal dollars to the ASPIRE program, now suffering from a major funding setback. LD 2198 is the appropriations bill which makes possible these changes.

- **AA Concerning Availability of Income Between Spouses in the Determination of Medicaid Eligibility for Nursing Home Level Care—LD 2081 •**

Legislative Sponsors: House Speaker John Martin and Representative John Lisnik.

Status: Under consideration by Committee on Human Resources, which held a public hearing on February 5, 1990.

Summary: This bill directs the Department of Human Services to make the State policy conform with federal law governing the spousal impoverishment provision of the Medicare Catastrophic Illness Act. Hence, the bill requires that no more than 50% of a couple's income be considered available to one spouse. This asset equity provision guarantees that a couple's income will not be depleted by medical care expenses if one spouse is placed in a nursing home.

- **RESOLVE, to Support a Study on Gender Bias in the Maine Courts—LD 2003 •**

Legislative Sponsors: Senators Nancy Clark and Muriel Halloway and Representative Judy Foss

Status: Under consideration by the Committee on Appropriations, which held a public hearing on January 25, 1990.

Summary: Requests a \$151,750 appropriation to fund a study to determine whether and to what extent gender bias exists in the Maine judicial system.

- **AA to Reduce the Use of Toxic Substances in the Workplace and Minimize the Generation of Hazardous Waste—LD 2192 •**

Legislative Sponsors: Representatives Ida Luther, Anne Rand, and Paul Jacques and Senator Judy Kany.

Status: Under consideration by the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, which held a public hearing on February 5, 1990.

Summary: This bill is an initiative of a coalition of labor and environmental advocates seeking to reduce exposure to hazardous wastes and chemicals in the workplace and the environment. The MWL testified in support of the legislation, referencing the importance of regulating and minimizing exposure to toxins hazardous to reproductive health. Such efforts are far preferable to discriminatory policies in other states that have restricted equal employment opportunities for women of childbearing age.

LOCAL LOBBY COORDINATOR FORM

Name: _____ Address: _____

Town and ZIP: _____

Telephone Numbers: (Day) _____ (Evening) _____

_____ Yes, I am interested in serving as a Local Lobby Coordinator in my area, which includes the following town(s):

_____ I would like to learn more about being a Local Lobby Coordinator.

Please complete and return this form, as soon as possible, to:

Maine Women's Lobby

P.O. Box 15

Hallowell, Maine 04347

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\$2 each. Send your check to:

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Hallowell, Maine 04347



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